

Agricultural Burning and Research Task Force Meeting #59, Summary

DATE: November 20, 2003

Location: Benton Clean Air, Richland WA.

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Grant Pfeifer- Chair	Department of Ecology
Larry Cochran	Washington Conservation Districts
Bill Johnston	WSU- Crop & Soil Sciences
Sally Liu	Public Health
Dave Lauer	Local Air Pollution Authorities
Jay Penner	Wheat Growers
<u>Members Absent</u>	
John Cornwall	Grass Growers
Mark Wagner	Alfalfa Seed Growers
Bob Gore	Department of Agriculture
Vacant	Academia Seat

Research:

The Agricultural Burning and Research Task Force (ABTF or Task Force) meeting began with a general discussion of the submitted research proposals and past research projects. Task Force members were reminded that some information regarding past research is posted on the ABTF web pages and the project files are available for review at Ecology's Eastern Regional Office.

Research Fund Report:

The ABTF reviewed the Research Fund Report. The report contains information describing how much money has been spent on research, research that has been completed, how much available research money exists, and long range budget estimates of research funds that could become available in future years through future permitting fees.

The discussion centered on how the state budget process works for these specific grant funds, the Air Pollution Control Account, and the process by which grant money is collected through the burn permit fees. Two sources of research dollars were discussed in detail.

"General Ag" research dollars for the 03-05 biennium	\$180,000
"Grass Seed" research dollars for the 03-05 biennium	\$14,000

1) Grass seed research:

Two Grant proposals were submitted that would be eligible to use grass seed research money. The Task Force discussed these two proposals and made the following recommendation:

- Development of High yielding Turf-type Kentucky Bluegrass Varieties for Non-thermal Management in Washington State (WSU)

Funding recommendation: \$14,000.

2) General agriculture research

The remaining proposals were categorized into three main categories:

- Emissions
- Farming Practices
- Straw Utilization

There was a round table discussion on whether to fund more emissions study work. Two proposals dealt with studying field burning emissions. The ABTF decided that additional time should be taken to evaluate the completed emission study before more money is invested into further emission research. The Task Force will wait to hear how growers and Ecology will use the completed wheat stubble emission study prior to recommending any additional funding in area.

Task Force members recommended setting aside \$40,000 of the original \$180,000 until the February 2004 Task Force Meeting. At that time, the Task Force will recommend allocation of the remaining \$40,000.

The Task Force then discussed the grants proposals in the remaining two categories and the following funding recommendations were made:

Farming Practices:

- Straw Management and Crop Rotation Alternatives to Stubble Burning (WSU/ Cunningham Farm), Funding recommendation: \$63,000.
- Direct Seeding into heavy irrigated Stubble as an Alternative to Burning (WSU/ Lind Farm), Funding recommendation: \$20,000

Straw Utilization:

- Utilization of Wheat Straw and of Bluegrass and Alfalfa Seed Grass Straws for Production of Paper and Molded Products (Lewis Engineering), Funding Recommendation: \$57,000.

Best Management Practices: Orchard tear out and CRP

Orchard Removal BMP's (Non-Cereal Section 5k.)

Ecology's Central Region Air Quality Program and Douglas County brought forth an issue regarding burning in a Urban Growth Area (UGA) where residential and land clearing burning are prohibited but burning considered to be "agricultural burning" is allowed (with a valid permit). The difficulties arise when making the determination between whether to classify an orchard tear out as agriculture or land clearing when the grower is unsure of the future use of the land.

Though this is a state wide issue, it was brought to the ABTF due to a specific concern within the East Wenatchee UGA and the differing interpretation of the rules pertaining to this type of burning. The request of the Task Force was to lend assistance in defining when an agricultural burn permit and subsequent Best Management Practices (BMP's) use would be appropriate in UGA's, specifically Douglas County, and East Wenatchee.

Ron Draggoo of the Douglas County Solid Waste Program presented the situations that affect orchards in the East Wenatchee area and what steps that the County has taken. Douglas County wants clarification about the agricultural burning rules and the definition of what are to be considered reasonable and economically viable alternatives to burning. They also would like to know how Ecology makes a determination on Ag. Burning vs. Land clearing within a UGA. Note: East Wenatchee has approximately 2000 acres of land zoned "agricultural" inside the defined UGA boundaries.

The Agricultural Burning Task Force:

- decided on an interim amendment to the Non-Cereal Crop BMP No. 5k to allow orchard tear-out burning inside a UGA in all cases except when the future use of the land is known to be non-agricultural. In cases where the future use of the land is unknown, burning under an agricultural burning permit from the Department of Ecology will be allowed. This interim amendment will be in effect until June 1, 2004.
- emphasized that Douglas county orchardists (farmers) will have to use Ecology's agricultural burn permit program. This would ensure that growers have defined permit conditions that should limit impacts on their neighbors.
- requested that Ecology and Local Governments work toward finding viable alternatives to burning in UGA's (as well as elsewhere)
- discussed the need for improved orchard planning to reduce avoidable pest emergencies and requested that Douglas County work with local grower associations to find or develop BMP's for planning and implementing orchard tear-out projects.
- requested that Douglas County work with growers and associations to develop grant proposals for research into alternatives to burning.

- requested that Ecology and Douglas County attend the ABTF meeting in February to provide an update.

Before the Task force makes any more recommendations they would like to see involvement on the ABTF by individuals with expertise in orchard farming practices and study the BMP's specific to orchards. It was also made clear that Ecology and the industry must seek long range solutions that can be used state wide. Ecology will draft the revised interim Non-Cereal Crop BMP NO. 5k and will route it to ABTF members for final approval.

Note: This interim decision affects only counties under Ecology's jurisdiction and not counties with Local Air Authorities.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) BMP's (Non-Cereal Section 7a.)

Ecology briefed the Task Force regarding an emerging issue surrounding the BMP's for burning lands enrolled in the CRP Program. The existing CRP BMP requires that a "CRP Certification Form" be signed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and submitted as part of the burn permit application process. The NRCS has a new policy which will not allow their staff to prescribe burning without extensive training which will most likely not be offered to staff in Eastern Washington. The NRCS is working with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), who also has responsibility over the CRP Program, to develop a policy regarding the option of burning on these lands.

The NRCS and FSA will present information to the ABTF at the February meeting regarding their suggested changes to the BMP. The existing BMP will remain in effect until a new one is proposed and accepted by the Task Force.

Other Topics

Task Force Governance

The ABTF and Ecology have been working on a governance policy over the past several meetings and a proposed final was presented to the Task Force. This is a non-legal document designed to give the task force guidance in meeting procedures, membership term limits, voting processes, and other procedural actions. The Governance Document was adopted by the Task Force with a few minor changes. Once the changes are made, copies will be sent out to all task force members and the document will be posted to the web.

Public Comment

There was no public comment during the comment and discussion period.

Next Meeting: February 12, 2003- tentatively in Spokane